

## **Salmon Region**

The Salmon Region was occupied by 16 documented resident, 5 documented border (including 1 tallied to Idaho [Hughes Creek] and 4 to Montana [Battlefield, Black Canyon, Painted Rocks, and Sula]), and 1 suspected packs during 2006 (Figure 13; Table 8). Nine of 11 confirmed reproductive packs also qualified as breeding pairs; lack of radiocollars prevented determining the reproductive status of the remaining resident packs. Lethal control was the primary source of mortality ( $n = 11$ ), followed by unknown ( $n = 4$ ), other human-related ( $n = 3$ ), and natural ( $n = 1$ ) causes. One pack (Blue Mountain) was functionally eliminated after the founding pair was killed for livestock depredations. Eight resident packs were responsible for 13 confirmed and probable cattle depredation losses. An additional 4 confirmed/probable cattle were killed by suspected packs or unknown wolves. The loss of 1 sheep was attributed to the Lemhi pack, 2 were confirmed killed by the Blue Mountain pack, and 3 sheep were killed by unknown wolves. Twelve wolves were captured; 11 were previously uncollared wolves that received radiocollars, and another wolf was recaptured and its radiocollar replaced.

### Law Enforcement Summary

Regional Conservation Officers, in consultation with USFWS Special Agents, investigated or responded to 7 reports involving wolves. In January, an IDFG officer and biologist responded to a wolf caught in a bobcat snare; the wolf had to be euthanized due to its injuries. Conservation officers also investigated 2 dead wolves for which cause of death could not be determined. Another 2 dead wolves were investigated by IDFG officers, 1 killed by a vehicle and the other died of natural causes. Two wolves shot near a ranch in Leadore were investigated, and it was determined by USFWS Special Agents that these shootings were justified under the 10(j) Rule. Lastly, an IDFG officer investigated a report of a foreign substance found near a suspected wolf den.

### Documented Resident Packs

#### *Aparejo*

Several sightings in spring 2006 of wolves near a tributary of the Middle Fork Salmon River in the Frank Church Wilderness prompted IDFG program to fly in and attempt to radiocollar this suspected pack. With generous assistance by the local outfitter and his guide, ample wolf sign was located and traps were set. As a result, 2 wolves were captured and fitted with radiocollars. Unfortunately, 1 collar was later retrieved, having been chewed off by other wolves. Due to the remoteness of the location and time constraints, this group of wolves was not surveyed to determine whether pups were present. As such, this pack was not considered a breeding pair in 2006. However, due to the relatively large pack size ( $n = 11$ ) observed in winter flights, reproduction in the previous year(s) was assumed with a reasonable degree of confidence, and this pack was retroactively counted for 2005.

#### *Basin Butte*

Originating from dispersing wolf B171 and her uncollared mate, this new pack established a territory north of Stanley and raised their first litter of 5 pups in spring-summer 2006. This pack was involved with 1 confirmed depredation of a domestic calf on private property. Trapping for this pack in the fall resulted in 2 pups being fitted with radiocollars, bringing to 3 the number of wolves being monitored in the pack. Aerial counts of 8 wolves confirmed the presence of a wolf

of unknown origin, in addition to the 5 pups and the breeding pair. This pack was considered a breeding pair for 2006.

#### *Blue Mountain*

This pair of wolves was lethally removed from an area between Challis and Blue Mountain in May after 2 sheep were confirmed killed on a private residence near Challis, Idaho. A necropsy suggested this wolf had given birth to multiple pups based upon placental scars, although it did not appear the animal had been nursing. It is unknown whether these wolves were associated with other wolves, or if they were a newly-established pair. However, because evidence indicated reproduction occurred, this was considered a newly established, but eliminated, pack.

#### *Buffalo Ridge*

In early winter 2005/2006, male B93 began traveling apart from the rest of the pack; it was thought that dispersing male B196 from the Morgan Creek pack, accepted into the Buffalo Ridge pack in February 2005, displaced him as breeding male. Denning surveys revealed the presence of 5 black pups, corroborating the assertion that this previously all-gray pack had a new breeding male. Wolf B95, wearing a non-functioning radiocollar, was also observed with the pups, suggesting she was still the breeding female. Two wolves were removed from this pack in January after a domestic calf was killed. Another wolf was trapped and radiocollared in spring. The Buffalo Ridge pack once again qualified as a breeding pair in 2006.



*Photo J. Husseman*

Suspected breeding female B95 of the Buffalo Ridge pack playing with several black pups at a rendezvous site.

#### *Castle Peak*

The status of this pack has been unknown since the disappearance of B195, the sole radiocollared wolf in the pack, in March 2004. While there was some speculation that the wolves using the

East Pass drainage could be the Castle Peak pack, the areas used by the wolves in East Pass was inconsistent with what the small amount of location data acquired on the Castle Peak pack revealed of their territorial use (see Pass Creek). Sightings of wolves and wolf sign, as well as a confirmed depredation in the East Fork Salmon River drainage, indicated this pack was still present; however, it was not counted as a breeding pair for 2006.

#### *Galena*

A longstanding pack in the Sawtooth Valley, the Galena pack's status was temporarily unknown in spring when the collar on B107 expired and wolf B253 dispersed. However, a flurry of wolf activity southeast of Stanley resulted in the capture and radiocollaring of 2 wolves by IDFG biologists in May (1 wolf subsequently died of unknown causes). The observation of 5 pups by a USFS biologist resulted in this pack qualifying as a breeding pair for 2006.

#### *Hoodoo*

Aerial telemetry locations indicate this pack once again denned in a tributary of the Middle Fork Salmon River, although the remoteness of the location precluded ground confirmation. During a trapping effort near a rendezvous site, multiple pups were heard howling along with several adults. Unfortunately, the only capture resulted in a wolf managing to pull itself free of the trap. Aerial observations in December indicated this pack consisted of 9 wolves. This pack was counted as a breeding pair for 2006.

#### *Jureano Mountain*

In 2006, the Jureano Mountain pack continued to use their traditional denning and rendezvous sites in the Panther Creek drainage west of Salmon, Idaho. A ground observation in January of a large, radiocollared gray wolf suggested B106, whose collar failed 2 years previous, remained as the pack's breeding male. Reproductive surveys and aerial observations verified 5 pups and a total of 12 wolves in this pack. There was a single documented mortality in 2006, when wolf B225 was found dead of unknown causes. This pack was responsible for 1 confirmed depredation on a calf. The control effort initiated from the depredation resulted in the capture and recollaring of wolf B223 by WS personnel. The Jureano Mountain pack was counted as a breeding pair for 2006.

#### *Landmark*

This pack has remained without a functioning radiocollar since 2003, and therefore little was known about their status. Surveys of historical use areas (den, rendezvous sites) in past years have indicated that this pack was still in existence; however, time constraints were such that no historical Landmark sites were surveyed in 2006. Therefore, this pack did not count as a breeding pair in 2006.

#### *Lemhi*

This pack was first discovered when Wildlife Service agents trapped and collared the suspected breeding male in response to a livestock depredation. The collared wolf led IDFG personnel to a probable den location where a single pup was observed. The Lemhi pack was implicated in depredations of 2 cattle and a single sheep. Aerial observations resulted in a pack count of at least 5 wolves. Although reproduction was documented, only 1 pup was observed; therefore, this pack did not satisfy the breeding pair definition.

### *Morgan Creek*

Aerial monitoring indicated this pack again used their traditional den location, but by the time the area was accessible, the wolves had already moved before reproduction could be confirmed. Four pups were eventually observed at a rendezvous site. In response to several sightings of wolves in the Morgan Creek drainage, a subadult wolf was captured and radiocollared by IDFG personnel. This pack was implicated in 3 confirmed or probable cattle losses, resulting in the lethal removal of 2 wolves. Another wolf, suspected breeding female B198, was found dead in December of unknown cause. Aerial observations indicated at least 11 wolves in the pack at the end of 2006. This pack qualified as a breeding pair in 2006.

### *Moyer Basin*

Based upon aerial and ground telemetry, it appeared this pack continued to use its traditional denning location, but ground searches revealed their 2004/2005 den to be unoccupied. After several attempts, a minimum of 2 pups were located several miles from their old den. The Moyer Basin wolves were responsible for 3 confirmed or probable cattle losses, which led to the lethal removal of 2 wolves. Two of 3 wolves radiocollared in the previous year also died in 2006, both killed by vehicles; male B243 was hit within the pack's territory in January, and male B242 was struck near Arco (tallied to Upper Snake region) in October after dispersing sometime in late summer. The third animal radiocollared in 2005 dispersed in winter, and was believed to be traveling with the Yankee Fork pack. Given the level of mortality, it was not unexpected that the end-of-year count dropped from 11 in 2005 to 7 in 2006. This pack met the criteria of a breeding pair for 2006.



*Photo J. Husseman*

An uncollared Moyer Basin pack wolf finds a shady spot to nap during a hot summer day.

### *Owl Creek*

Since this pack was first verified by IDFG biologists in 2005, there have been no reports of wolf sightings or activity from the remote location this pack is believed to occupy. Therefore, this pack did not qualify as a breeding pair in 2006.



### *Pass Creek*

This pack was initially located in 2005 when IDFG personnel confirmed reports of wolves using the upper tributaries of the East Fork Salmon River. Subsequent investigations in summer 2006 led to the capture of a subadult wolf, as well as an observation of 3 pups. Given their proximity to the uncollared Castle Peak pack, there was speculation this newly radiocollared pack could be the Castle Peak pack (see Castle Peak). However, telemetry locations and other evidence suggested these were in fact 2 separate packs. The Pass Creek pack was implicated in 1 cattle loss, although no lethal control was conducted. Aerial counts resulted in a minimum pack size of 6 wolves. The Pass Creek wolves qualified as a breeding pair for 2006.



*Photo J. Husseman*

Wolf B297 of the Pass Creek pack recuperates from anesthesia after being trapped and fitted with a radiocollar.

### *Twin Peaks*

The collarless Twin Peaks pack's existence has until recently been confirmed via surveys for wolf activity at their traditional rendezvous site. However, time constraints did not permit a survey of this remote area in 2006 (a survey in 2005 indicated this pack did not return to their rendezvous site). This pack was not counted as a breeding pair in 2006.

### *Yankee Fork*

Initially documented in late summer 2005 with the radiocollaring of female B252, this pack appeared to have gained another member when wolf B240 was located with them in early spring. However, wolf B252 was found dead of natural causes in June. Attempts to confirm reproduction based on B240's movements proved unsuccessful, as he ranged widely throughout the pack territory. Evidence suggested this animal was traveling alone, raising questions with respect to his pack association, or whether the Yankee Fork pack was still intact. During a winter monitoring flight, wolf B240 was seen with at least 2 other wolves within the pack's territory, indicating pack persistence. Because reproduction was not verified, the Yankee Fork pack was not counted as a breeding pair in 2006.

## Documented Border Packs

### *Battlefield (MT)*

The Battlefield pack was a Montana-documented pack whose territory overlapped the state border near Gibbonsville, Idaho. As in 2005, depredations in Montana's Big Hole Valley led to control actions that resulted in lethal removal of 6 wolves in 2006. In November and December 2006, the sole radiocollared Battlefield wolf was located on the Idaho side of the border. By the end of 2006, aerial observations indicated this pack numbered 4 wolves. The Battlefield pack was not listed as a breeding pair for Montana in 2006.

### *Black Canyon (MT)*

The Black Canyon pack was a Montana-documented pack. Although there was no evidence that this pack's territory overlapped into Idaho, this pack was considered a border pack because of the close proximity to the Montana/Idaho border around the upper Lemhi River area. Depredations led to removal of 3 wolves from this pack. An adult male wolf was opportunistically radiocollared by WS conducting coyote control in February; however, radio contact with this wolf was lost in August. Although reproduction was not confirmed, a minimum of 2 wolves continued to occupy this pack's territory.

### *Hughes Creek*

Until 2006, the Hughes Creek pack had managed to evade capture; however, IDFG biologists managed to dart and radiocollar the suspected breeding male during big game helicopter surveys in January. In late spring, the suspected breeding female was observed with a large litter, consisting of 4 black and 4 gray pups. Another observation during winter big game surveys in December resulted in a minimum pack count of 13 wolves. Because this pack was located in Montana on 1 occasion, they are considered to be a border pack. The Hughes Creek pack was a breeding pair for 2006.

### *Painted Rocks (MT)*

The Painted Rocks pack was a Montana-documented pack. Wolf activity was first documented by NPT in the Painted Rocks area (West Fork of the Bitterroot River near the Montana-Idaho border) with the dispersal of Idaho female B67 in 2001. B67 was monitored through 2002, and the pack has not been collared since. At least 4 wolves have been in the area continuously and appeared to spend the majority of their time on the Montana side of the border. MTFWP personnel scouted the West Fork several times during the summer and found old wolf sign but nothing fresh enough to trap on. MTFWP conducted snow tracking surveys in the West Fork in December and confirmed a minimum of 4 wolves at the end of 2006. Montana did not count this pack as a breeding pair in 2006.

### *Sula (MT)*

The Sula pack was a Montana-documented pack. Seven wolves were believed to exist in the Sula pack at the beginning of 2006. The pack appeared to localize near the denning season but no pups were seen or documented. Monitoring of the radiocollared wolf resulted in a minimum count of 7 wolves in this pack. This pack was not considered a breeding pair in 2006.

## Suspected Resident Packs

### *Leadore*

In early spring 2006, the probable breeding male and female from this often-seen group of wolves were shot under authority of the 10(j) Rules near a ranch south of Leadore. A necropsy revealed the female was in fact pregnant, although it was undetermined if the other wolf shot was the breeding male. While reproduction by this group was prevented, other wolves were reportedly seen in the area prior to, as well as after, the shooting of the 2 wolves. With the presence of other wolves, the potential existed for this suspected pack to continue to occupy the area. Future monitoring will be required to determine the status of this group.

## Other Documented Wolf Groups

### *B191 (MT)*

A disperser from the Soldier Mountain pack, B191 was missing for several months before she was eventually located in summer 2006 with another wolf in the Big Hole Valley, Montana. Although this pair was occasionally located on the Idaho side of the Beaverhead Mountains, aerial telemetry locations indicated these wolves were residing primarily in Montana and will be counted for that state's total.

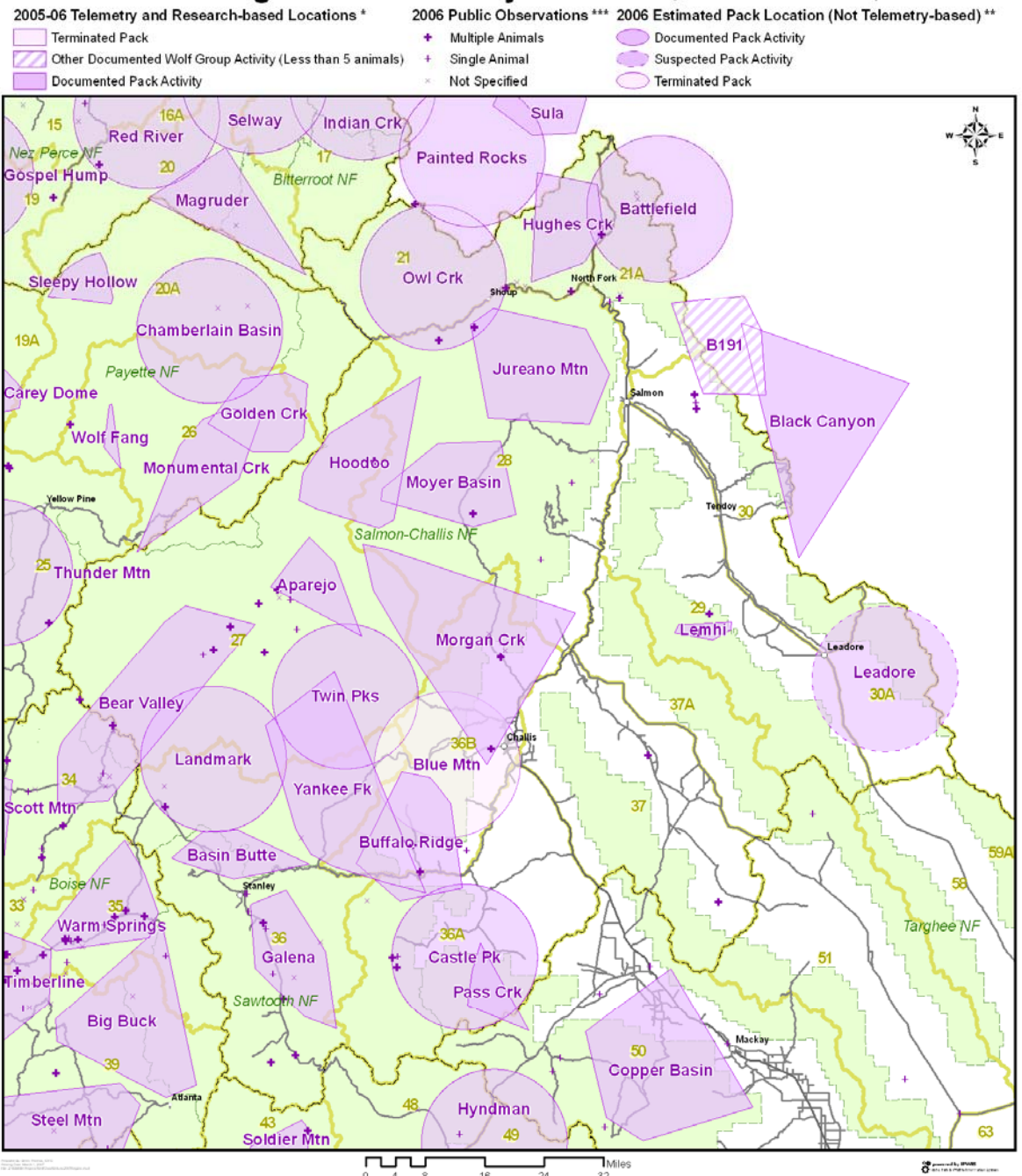
### *B267*

Wolf B267 was found dead of unknown causes in a tributary of the Middle Fork Salmon River, within the Salmon Region boundary. Thought to be a member of the Golden Creek pack in the adjacent McCall Subregion, it was unknown if this wolf was dispersing or if it was traveling with other Golden Creek wolves when it died.

### *SW-64*

Originally a member of the Sage Creek pack in Montana, wolf SW-64 appeared to have dispersed and was located by IDFG and MTFWP biologists traveling with an uncollared wolf between southwest Montana and the upper Lemhi Valley, Idaho. After a confirmed livestock depredation in October, the uncollared wolf traveling with SW-64 was lethally controlled southeast of Leadore. Wolf SW-64 remained in the general vicinity, and by late fall, all telemetry locations of this wolf were within the Lemhi Valley. This animal will continue to be monitored in 2007.

## 2006 Salmon Region Wolf Activity



\* Telemetry data and research locations collected and analyzed by Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the Nez Perce Tribe, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the National Park Service. Pack locations are minimum convex polygons of telemetry and research observations for radio-collared wolves from 1/1/2005 - 12/31/2006 with outliers removed. Packs which did not exist in 2006 are excluded. This map is provided for management purposes and should not be used for data analysis. Do not release these data to third parties without first contacting the Idaho Department of Fish and Game or the Nez Perce Tribe.

\*\* Estimated Pack Activity determined by biologists from research locations, public observations and incidental observations from 1/1/2005 - 12/31/2006.  
\*\*\* Public Observations from 1/1/2006 - 12/31/2006 collected on the Idaho Fish and Game website and reviewed by staff biologists.

Map Produced by Idaho Fish and Wildlife Information System, Idaho Fish and Game in cooperation with: The Nez Perce Tribe; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; USDAAPHIS Wildlife Services; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; and the National Park Service

Figure 13. Wolf pack activity and observations in the Salmon Region, 2006.



Table 8. Estimated pack size, reproductive status, mortality, dispersal, monitoring status, and livestock depredation for documented and suspected wolf packs within Idaho Department of Fish and Game Salmon Region, 2006.

Wolf pack or group	Min. no. wolves detected <sup>a</sup>	Reproductive status			Documented mortalities					Known dispersal	Monitoring status			Confirmed & probable wolf-caused livestock losses		
		Min. no. pups prod.	Reported as reprod. packs	Reported as breeding pairs <sup>b</sup>	Natural	Control <sup>c</sup>	Other		Active radio collars		Number wolves captured <sup>f</sup>	Number wolves missing <sup>g</sup>	Cattle	Sheep	Dogs	
							human <sup>d</sup>	Unknown <sup>e</sup>								
Documented pack																
Aparejo	11	?	no	no	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	
Basin Butte	8	5	yes	yes	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	1	0	0	
Battlefield (MT) <sup>h</sup>																
Black Cyn (MT) <sup>h</sup>																
Blue Mountain <sup>i</sup>	0	?	yes	no	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	
Buffalo Ridge	6	5	yes	yes	0	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	
Castle Peak	?	?	no	no	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
Galena	6	5	yes	yes	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	
Hoodoo	9	2	yes	yes	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Hughes Creek (ID)	13	8	yes	yes	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	
Jureano Mountain	12	5	yes	yes	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	
Landmark	?	?	no	no	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Lemhi	5	1	yes	no	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	
Morgan Creek	11	4	yes	yes	0	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	3	0	0	
Moyer Basin	7	2	yes	yes	0	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	3	0	0	
Owl Creek	?	?	no	no	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Painted Rocks (MT) <sup>h</sup>																
Pass Creek	6	3	yes	yes	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1 <sup>j</sup>	0	0	
Sula (MT) <sup>h</sup>																
Twin Peaks	?	?	no	no	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Yankee Fork	3	?	no	no	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Subtotal	97	40			1	8	1	3	4	16	12	0	13	3	0	
Suspected pack																
Leadore	?				0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	
Subtotal					0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	
Other doc. group																
B191 (MT) <sup>h</sup>																
B267	0				0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
SW-64	1				0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Subtotal	1				0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	

Table 8. Continued.

Wolf pack or group	Min. no. wolves detected <sup>a</sup>	Reproductive status				Documented mortalities				Known dispersal	Monitoring status			Confirmed & probable wolf-caused livestock losses		
		Min. no. pups prod.	Reported as reprod. packs	Reported as breeding pairs <sup>b</sup>	Natural	Control <sup>c</sup>	Other		Active radio collars		Number wolves captured <sup>f</sup>	Number wolves missing <sup>g</sup>	Cattle	Sheep	Dogs	
							human <sup>d</sup>	Unknown <sup>e</sup>								
Unknown					0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0
Subtotal					0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0
Regional total	98	40			1	11	3	4	4	17	12	0	17	6	0	0

<sup>a</sup> Number of wolves detected by wolf program personnel through observations of wolves or wolf sign and believed alive at end of 2006. Unknown status denoted by “?” Sum of this column does not equate to number of wolves estimated to be present in the population.

<sup>b</sup> Breeding pairs are the measure of Federal and State wolf recovery and management goals. A breeding pair is defined as “an adult male and an adult female wolf that have produced at least 2 pups that survive until December 31 of the year of their birth...”.

<sup>c</sup> Includes agency lethal control and legal take by landowners.

<sup>d</sup> Includes all other human-related deaths.

<sup>e</sup> Does not include pups that disappeared before winter.

<sup>f</sup> Includes all wolves captured during 2006. Most, but not all, were radiocollared.

<sup>g</sup> Radiocollared wolves that became missing in 2006.

<sup>h</sup> Border pack officially tallied to (state); territory known or likely shared with Idaho. Data on these packs can be found in Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery 2006 Interagency Annual Report.

<sup>i</sup> Lethally removed during 2006; not included in end-of-year tallies.

<sup>j</sup> Depredation attributed to this pack occurred outside the Salmon Region.